

Graduates of 1980 should reason deeply on world

Comment

By ADM. STANSFIELD TURNER

Graduates of 1980, your parents and I, in the decade after World War II, stood where you stand today.

The world was trying to pick up the pieces left by the war, and the United States was adjusting to a new role in that world.

From the isolationism of the 1920s and 1930s, suddenly America's interests were worldwide and the mantle of Free World leadership was ours. That changed our lives markedly.

Today, the United States faces changes in its relationship with the rest of the world that are just as profound and will surely affect your future just as much. The world in the 1980s will be as different from the 1960s and 1970s as were the 1940s from the 1930s.

A big difference for you, however, is that it is likely you will have to help America adapt to that change without a cataclysmic event, like a world war, such as we had. You will need to define America's new role in a world where conditions are evolutionary and change subtle — circumstances which you may not detect if you are not alert.

Dominant force

For 35 years, the United States has traditionally been the dominant force within the Western alliance. Will we remain its leader in the 1980s? You can expect surprises from our allies.

The Europeans and the Japanese are prosperous economically and stable politically. They rightfully feel and act independent. They acknowledge that their security is tied to their relationship with us, but the scramble for oil and other natural resources today has become so vi-

tal to their existence that they must be heard in the debate on how the Western world will cope with these problems. The alliance is not doomed to weaken, but it will change. It will function with far more regard for the independent voices of its members and that should strengthen it.

If our relationship with our allies must inevitably change, so too will our relations with the Soviet Union. You will need to adjust to a different Soviet Union in the 1980s. From Stalin, through Khrushchev, to Brezhnev, Soviet leadership has been cautious and conservative in avoiding possible military confrontations with the United States.

In the 1980s, however, we will face the first Soviet leadership that does not feel inferior to us militarily.

Combat force

Last December in Afghanistan the Soviets committed their military forces to combat outside the Soviet bloc for the first time since World War II. Beyond demonstrating that they are likely to continue to take advantage of opportunities when they occur, does this aggressiveness indicate a new willingness to take risks?

How will the pressure from their deteriorating economy influence Soviet leaders? Will military adventures be used to cover up domestic economic deficiencies? Will the military be used to augment their diminishing oil production? Or will economic weakening keep them at home?

Much depends on who those Soviet leaders will be. Today's aged leaders will be gone. Their successors are unlikely to be as cautious or as predictable in dealing with the United States. You had better be prepared for more surprises from Moscow in the future than we have had in the past.

The scramble for natural resources will be another element of change you will encounter in the 1980s. The most obvious example is oil. Should we take other imports for granted? We import virtually all of our rubber, coffee, chromium, cobalt, tin, and most of our manganese and nickel.

Nations that used to be pliant to our resource needs are independently determining what is best for them, not us. And, as they develop, their own growing needs compete with ours. You will have to understand these nations, their aspirations and their people.

Fervent hope

It is my fervent hope that you will not have a war to startle you into appreciating how different the role of the United States will be in the world of the 1980s. Your parents and I did not have to be as perceptive as you will have to be.

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